

**SENIOR REVIEW AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATION**  
**Salton Sea Financial Assistance Program – FY 2012-2013**

- ✓ **Applicant:** Salton Sea Authority, Torres Martinez Tribe
- ✓ **Project Title:** Habitat Creation and Enhancement: GeoTube Technology and Solar PV Power on Salton Sea Playa, Torres Martinez Wetlands
- ✓ **County:** Riverside
- ✓ **Grant Request:** \$1,339,887
- ✓ **Total Project Cost:** \$1,539,887

**Project Description:**

The project will restore nine existing ponds at the Torres Martinez wetlands, enhance two existing ponds, create 20 acres of new habitat using new berm technology (GeoTubes) and develop photovoltaic (PV) capability to power reliable and sustainable water delivery to all ponds. Project will monitor all project elements with scientifically sound protocols developed with USGS and will develop future funding sources to assure sustainability of the wetland complex, exploring options for further expansion.

**Summary**

Criteria	Score	Factor	Total
1. Consistency with Program goals and objectives	4	7	28
2. Applicant qualifications	3	3	9
3. Project Readiness	5	3	15
4. Feasibility	4	7	28
Total Score			<u>80</u>

**Consistency with Program goals and objectives:**

The project addresses the objectives of the program by restoring degraded, existing wetlands, and expanding new wetlands at the northern area of the Sea. These wetlands will provide habitat for fish and wildlife dependent on the Sea. Over time, monitoring information from the project will help managers understand how long it takes for wildlife to find and use the habitat, and to observe ecological succession. The project will, no doubt, become a recreation alternative for bird watchers and fishermen at the Sea. The protocols for monitoring wildlife activities at the Sea have been adapted from USGS MAP protocols, although they are not described in any detail. Many Operations and Maintenance tasks are listed for this project. If the O&M can be maintained and the energy for the water delivery system is adequate and sustainable, the project should have a long life.

*Other positive comments about the project:*

- Reasonable, relatively modest proposal, not too large but adding needed acreage of habitat;
- Previous similar habitat restoration effort was successful, birds and fish (and other organisms) were found in abundance at the wetlands.
- Project addresses the reason for the current state of the previous project, i.e., energy cost of pumping water to be offset by photovoltaic array.

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- The water source, Whitewater Storm Channel, a blend of local aquifer and Colorado River water, is relatively reliable and somewhat better quality than New and Alamo Rivers that are comprised of 100% Colorado River water.
- This project is located in the northern portion of the Sea while most projects going on now are located at the southern end of the Sea. The expansion of projects to the northern area is of great benefit to the area.
- The idea of using of GeoTubes to stabilize berms and sequester sediment containing selenium has been around for a while; the usefulness will be tested in this project.

**Applicant qualifications:**

The resumés of the local project manager, the consulting project manager and the installer of the GeoTube are extensive. The first two have long histories of working at the Sea, and the resume of the head of the dredging company indicates that he has recent, successful experience in installing GeoTubes and contracts to do more in other locations.

*Other positive comments about the project:*

- Applicants are well qualified to oversee the construction and monitoring of the project for the next three years.
- The main proponent, Debi Livesay, has been working on this project for a number of years.
- The consultants have a great deal of related experience and have worked at the Salton Sea on other projects, which were completed successfully.
- The Salton Sea Authority, of which the Torres Martinez is a board member, is providing administrative oversight.

**Project Readiness:**

The proposed site is close to the existing wetlands project, which has gone through the permitting process. It should be relatively routine to expand the permits to include the new area. There will no doubt be challenges in bringing equipment and supplies for project construction, but these challenges do not appear to be any more extensive than for any other project at the Sea.

**Feasibility:**

The history of constructed wetlands near this site indicates that the concept is viable and will meet project objectives for a long time to come provided that the energy source for pumping water supply can be stabilized and the local agencies and Torres Martinez Tribe are involved. The site will no doubt become a tourist destination, as the Salton Sea is a major location along the Pacific Flyway. With the expected changes and reduction in habitat in the coming years, this site would offer passive wildlife viewing at the north end of the Sea.

*Suggestion for improvements:*

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- There is a letter of commitment by the Desert Cahuila Wetlands Board supporting the project. A letter from the Torres Martinez Tribe committing to continuing the project past the three-year schedule would be a strong message of support

**FUNDING RECOMMENDATION:**     **\$1,339,887**

FAP staff is committed to distributing funding to multiple projects that engage a wide range of stakeholders in restoration and research activities at the Salton Sea. Consequently, the decision was made to allocate the modest \$3m in FAP funding among the top ranking proposals in a way that would enable meaningful progress for each project. We are able to fund all requested work except the monitoring component. We hope the applicant is able to leverage FAP funds to find partner or matching funds from another source.